

# Determining employee perceptions towards performance management and development

## A case study

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Performance management and development, particularly in public organisations, have become a bone of contention between managers and employees. The reality is that, without the effective and efficient management and development of employees, public organisations will not be able to achieve their mandate of delivering quality services to the public. The significance of enhancing the performance of human resources in organisations is the central theoretical argument for this article, as a competent and committed workforce can contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives. On the basis of this theoretical assumption, the need for employees to adopt a positive perception towards the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) is imperative. The article endeavours to determine the nature of employee perceptions towards the PMDS, specifically as it relates to the implementation by the North West Department of Social Development, Women, Children, and People with Disabilities (DSDWCPD) with particular emphasis on the Matlosana Service Point as a case study. The argument put forth by the article is that the lack of shared understanding amongst managers and employees regarding the purpose, process and value of the PMDS contributes to the negative employee perceptions. The article uses a mixed method approach with a case study design for in-depth understanding and analysis. Data was collected through a document review supported by a semi-structured questionnaire. Purposive sampling was used and participants from all salary levels were included in the research. The article concludes by recommending a systematic training strategy as synthesis towards addressing the negative perceptions employees have towards the manner in which the PMDS is implemented.*

## INTRODUCTION

An employee's performance is essential to achieving the competitive advantage in the labour market where skilled, committed people are increasingly hard to find and keep (Prasetya & Kato 2011:1). Establishing an organisational culture that fosters good performance from all employees at all levels is a vital characteristic of any public organisation. However, being able to establish such a performance culture implies management and leadership capabilities where employees will be consulted about their input and given feedback regularly. Where employees' perceptions are not considered, it could result in a demoralised workforce leading to the poor motivation and poor performance of both the employee and the organisation (Armstrong 2009; Schwartz 1999; in Whittford & Coetsee 2006:63).

The process of measuring and subsequently actively managing organisational and employee performance in order to improve organisational effectiveness is currently seen as critical to the development and survival of the organisation (Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe 2004:2). Employee and organisational levels of performance are important to the effectiveness of the organisation and if the PMDS can be managed and implemented properly, it will assist in creating a work environment where people are motivated to perform to the best of their abilities, improve the organisational culture and be able to attract and retain those who are valuable to the organisation's success (Letsoalo, 2007:4).

For an organisation to be able to perform well, it needs to utilise its resources effectively to deliver quality services or products on time and efficiently. Progress review, feedback, corrective action as well as rewards for performance are integral parts of the process (Nel, Werner, Poisant, Sono, du Plessis & Ngalo 2011:300). The North West DSDWCPD, like all provincial departments, uses a uniform PMDS. The aim of the system is to provide the guidelines for objectively managing and optimising performance of departmental employees from levels 1–12, including professionals covered by the Occupation Specific Dispensation. The system applies to all employees appointed by the provincial administration, other than employees who are members of senior management whose management of performance is separately provided for (DSDWCPD 2011). The DSDWCPD (2011:7) prescribes that the purpose of the PMDS is to:

- enhance organisational performance against the strategic plan;
- enhance individual performance against agreed-upon objectives by solving individuals' performance problems;
- allow for frequent communication and enhance the manager-employee relationship;
- find constructive and firm interventions in managing under performance;
- reward good performance;
- assist employees in their development and career progress; and
- enable and promote a culture of continuous improved service delivery.

By placing emphasis on the shared or joint nature of the PMDS, the deduction can be made that managers and employees should exhibit shared perceptions regarding its purpose, process and value. Employers are therefore responsible for ensuring that the management and development of performance is done appropriately and that managers and employees have a common understanding of the objectives of the organisation, the PMDS, its implementation and the results thereof.



If employees have a negative perception of the PMDS, Nyembezi (2009:31) contends that they are unlikely to take an active part in the process because they do not see any value in it, which in turn creates low morale, absenteeism and inevitably affects productivity. In the DSDWCPD the Audit Report, 2008 (DSDWCPD 2008:79–81), the Quarterly Review Report, 2009 (DSDWCPD 2009:39) and the Annual Report, 2010/2011 (DSDWCPD 2011:91) reveal a bleak picture of the way employee performance is managed:

- Absenteeism is high and 55% of the leave days taken by employees could not be accounted for as there were no approved leave forms presented for employees indicated as absent from work on the attendance register. The Report (DSDWCPD 2009:79) also indicated that no action was taken against those who did not account for being absent from work.
- Poor performance is also argued to be caused by employee tardiness at work, as they fail to keep to their daily schedule, resulting in failure to reach targets; a negative working culture of employees, including leaving for home before the end of the day, and it appears that new employees are quickly being socialised to this behaviour because they are not properly monitored (DSDWCPD 2009:39).
- According to the Annual Report 2010/2011 (DSDWCPD 2011:91) the other factor that was cited as a problem which impacts negatively upon the performance of employees is the lack of dedicated staff and capacity to implement some projects and other services, all of which create backlogs in cases.
- The Annual Report 2010/2011 (DSDWCPD 2011:143) further indicates that the annual turnover rate for critical occupations for 2010/2011 was 5,1%, which appears to be higher than expected. Critical occupation groups consist of social workers, community liaison officers, probation officers and child and youth care workers.
- Insufficient line management support for performance and the insufficient guidance and poor feedback on performance management by the managers to their subordinates are indicated by the Annual Report (DSDWCPD, 2011:84) as major problems, which often lead to inconsistent, inadequate information and late submissions of performance reports. The over-emphasis on compliance and appraisal at the expense of development, also gives effect to poor quality performance because of a poor understanding of what the job requires and what the objectives of the organisation are. One-on-one performance meetings and quarterly meetings are not scheduled between employees and their managers (DSDWCPD 2011:86).

The Annual Report (DSDWCPD 2011:86) further highlights an ineffective and inefficient PMDS, poor planning, organising, monitoring and reporting by both individual employees and managers, resulting in a lack of understanding of the process. In order to achieve the organisation's objectives it is important that the PMDS be perceived as a tool for developing, rewarding and motivating both the employee and the organisation, not just as a requirement to comply with. Against this background the purpose of the article is to determine the perceptions of employees regarding the PMDS used in the DSDWCPD, at Matlosana Service Point. The article is based upon research conducted which identified the advantages, inefficiencies and shortcomings of the PMDS as revealed through the perceptions of employees. Before endeavouring to determine the perceptions of employees regarding the PMDS at the DCDWCPD, specifically at the Matlosana Service Point, it is important to understand what perceptions are and how they are formed.

## WHAT IS PERCEPTION?

Perception is defined by Bratton, Sawchuk, Forshaw, Callinan and Corbett (2010:129) as the process of selecting, organising and interpreting information in order to make sense of the world. Nzuve and Monica (2011:1) postulate that perception is the process of organising, interpreting and integrating external stimuli. Employee perception is a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impression in order to give meaning to their environment (Panimalar & Kannan 2013:18). In all definitions, an emphasis is placed upon the ability of the employee (in this case) to organise, interpret and integrate information regarding the PMDS in order to attach a negative or positive meaning to it.

Otara (2011:21) affirms that having the right perception is a significant skill for any effective manager. Otara (2011:1) further states that a manager can have the best intentions and honest concern for his or her employees, but if he/she does not communicate in a manner that employees can comprehend, then perception may work contrary to the right intentions. Through communication and consultation, managers are in a better position to identify wrong perceptions of employees and influence them positively, so as to support organisational objectives. Perception is not a concept a manager can directly access or fix in others. What managers need, is an understanding of how this factor impacts a person's view of the work environment (Elgana 2012:57).

Being able to identify and understand different perceptions of employees can assist the manager to put in place measures and systems to address negative perceptions, which can have adverse effects on the performance of employees and the overall organisational performance. Though effective processes are important in any PMDS, the human factor is the most important component indicating whether employees perceive the system as effective. The relationship between an employee and his or her manager is the key factor in driving those perceptions (Oberoi & Rajgarhia 2014:3).

According to Bratton *et al.* (2010:135) people's ability to perceive depends upon three factors, namely:

- receiving: being physically able to attend to and receive signals from the environment (for instance, having sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell, and being able to control that which is employed at a given moment);
- organising: being able to mentally organise and combine those signals (which is what is happening when a person sees and hears speech in perfect synchronisation, or see objects separate from their surroundings, rather than as a mass of light patterns); and
- interpreting: being able to assign meaning or make sense of what is experienced (for instance, attaching personal significance to a particular combination of sensory signals, like knowing when a person is in a conversation and he or she needs to talk back, or a person is threatening others, or a bus is approaching).

Thus, from the above, it can be argued that, in order to influence the perceptions of employees regarding the PMDS, managers would need to understand how the system is received, and information regarding performance is organised and interpreted. Creating a positive perception means sending a positive message regarding the system. An effective PMDS can drive and inspire employees to perform productively to realise the organisation's



objectives. To determine the perceptions of employees towards the PMDS, a specific research method was followed, which will now be discussed.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Understanding perceptions of a phenomenon within a particular case setting requires a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research focuses upon the significance of meaning derived from data (Rasmussen, Ostergaard & Beckman 2006:93). This research approach was also selected because of its naturalistic, holistic and inductive way of studying and understanding the phenomenon, as well as its ability to be flexible.

The population for the study was drawn from the 99 employees of DSDWCPD working at the Matlosana Service Point. A sample of 50 employees, purposively sampled, was selected and comprised permanently employed officials across salary levels 1 to 12. Specific demographic characteristics of the sample include:

- 80,4% were female and 19,6% were males.
- 38% were between the ages of 20–29 years, 34,6% between the ages of 30–39 and 27% were older than 40 years of age.
- Social workers accounted for 42,3% of the respondents, while social auxiliary workers comprised 40,4% of the respondents. The rest of the respondents occupied administrative positions in the organisation (17,3%).

The instruments used in data collection comprise the secondary analysis of documents, which refers to the analysis of any written material that contains information about the phenomenon that is being researched (De Vos *et al.* 2005:314). Data was also collected through a semi-structured questionnaire. Boone (2003:105) asserts that although questionnaires often investigate subjective issues that are quantitative rather than qualitative (objective), they can be used to provide results that can be rigorously analysed in qualitative research. Welman *et al.* (2005:101) further contend that questionnaires reveal higher quality data since they measure the state of affairs at a specific time, and the opinions of all respondents are comparable.

The use of a questionnaire was specifically appropriate in this case, since some employees may have been scared to talk about their own experiences regarding the PMDS, as this might have been seen as exposing those who are not doing what is expected of them. Therefore, respondents were assured of their anonymity. In qualitative research the pilot study is usually informal and is done to ascertain certain trends (De Vos *et al.* 2005:331). Piloting of the questionnaire was conducted using 10 employees from the district office, DSDWCPD. The questionnaire was given to the employees to complete after which the questionnaire was analysed to determine the flaws and to make appropriate modifications. Fifty questionnaires were distributed to the respondents to complete and all the questionnaires were received back from the respondents.

Thematic analysis of data was undertaken, where themes were described as the umbrella concepts identified by the researcher before, during and after the data collection. According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:338) quoting Creswell (1998:144) the process of classifying means taking the text or qualitative information apart and looking for categories, themes, or

dimensions of information. The content of the quantitative data from the questionnaire was presented by means of graphs, supplemented with qualitative thematic discussion.

The next section will describe the findings from the research according to specific themes, which include the perceptions regarding the purpose of the PMDS and the manner in which it has been implemented.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Different perceptions can be beneficial in an organisation, since it can help the organisation to realise its objectives by respecting individual employee differences which may lead to increased performance levels. The fact that employees have different perceptions regarding the PMDS should not be the problem. However, if employees do not understand the purpose and what the PMDS entails, they may not commit to the vision of the organisation, which can hinder the success of the system and the overall performance of the organisation, as the activities of the employees would not be aligned with the organisation's strategic goals.

### Perceptions regarding the purpose of the PMDS

A lack of understanding of the purpose and use of the PMDS can create incorrect perceptions amongst employees; employees may perceive the system as mainly focusing upon appraisal, personal goals and incentives, rather than a means to enhance both the employee and the organisational performance.

The following figure provides an analysis of employees' perceptions regarding their knowledge of the PMDS.

Figure 1 Knowledge of PMDS

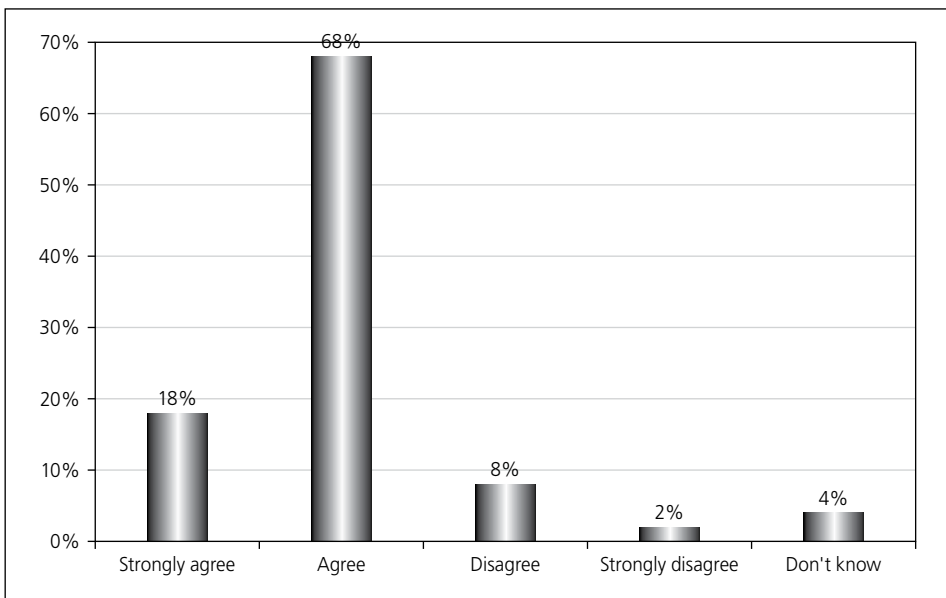


Figure 1 reflects respondents' answers regarding their knowledge of the purpose of the PMDS as a development tool matching their individual performance to the performance of the organisation. As can be seen from the figure, the majority of employees (18% + 68%) stated that they agree with what the PMDS entailed, including what is required of them. Only a total of 10% of the respondents disagreed with the view. Of the total sample, only 4% of the respondents did not know and therefore did not understand what the PMDS was about or what it required of them.

To the open-ended question regarding the purpose of the PMDS, employees indicated that they do not always know which criteria are used for the measurement of their performance, since some employees receive recognition, and others do not. One respondent remarked that managers tasked with communicating the purpose of the PMDS do not even know what employees are doing. So even though quantitatively employees agree that they understand the purpose, qualitatively diverse perceptions exist regarding the ability of the PMDS to realise its purpose. These negative perceptions regarding the system could be influenced by the unfairness shown during the performance appraisals/assessments. Another reason could also be that the employees have knowledge of the system, but they cannot comprehend the system holistically. Instead they understand certain elements of the system, and perceive the outcome as unfair when only some receive monetary rewards and others do not.

The argument can be made that if employees agree to what the purpose of the system is, they would also have a positive perception of the system. However, from the open-ended questions, the opposite was indicated. While knowing what the system should achieve, their negative perception emerged on how the system is used.

## **Perceptions regarding the manner in which the PMDS has been implemented**

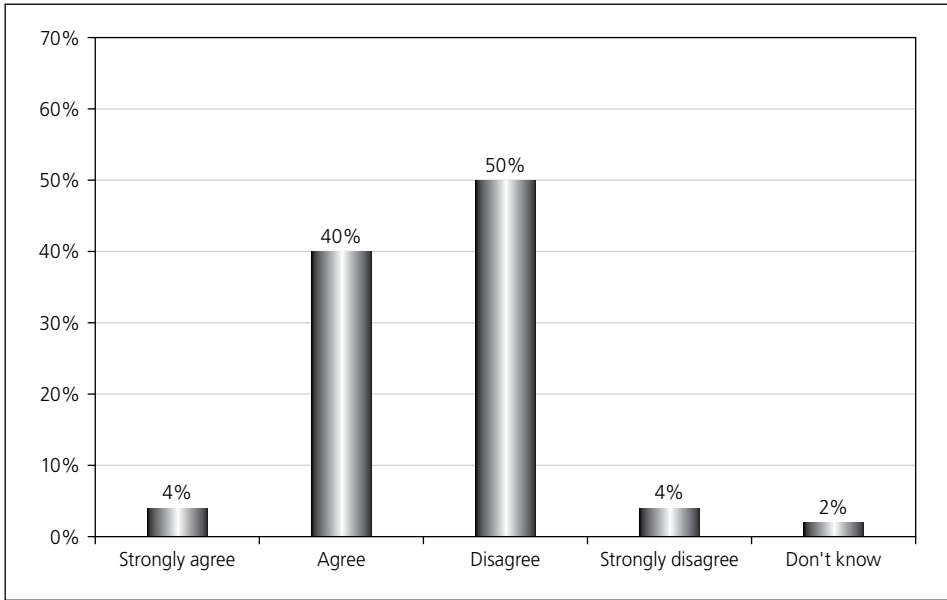
An effective PMDS is essential to ensure that both individuals and the organisation are heading in the same direction in terms of its priorities. Effectiveness refers to the ability to achieve set goals and objectives. It also has to do with the actual impact of service and quality of service rendered (Productivity SA 2007:27). In simpler terms, it refers to the extent to which a programme or policy achieves its immediate objectives or produces its desired outcome. In this context, the PMDS will thus be examined to determine the extent to which it fulfils its purpose (that is, in terms of the achievement of agreed objectives).

The above will be determined by looking at whether performance contracts are signed on time, whether there is continuous feedback between manager and employee, as well as whether the employees are satisfied with their assessments and feedback.

Figure 2 represents the data regarding whether the performance agreements are signed on time.

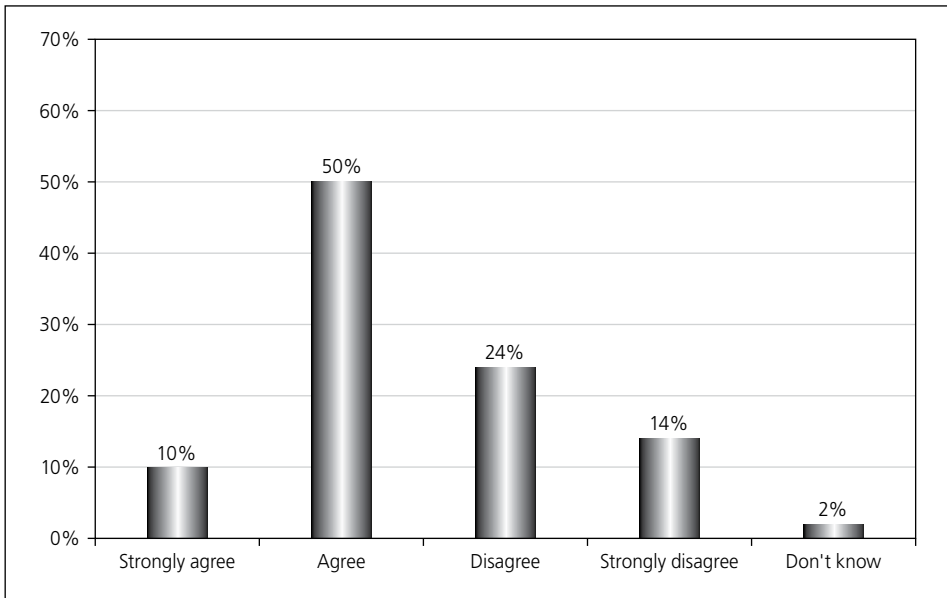
The aim of the question as to whether performance agreements are signed on time was to establish the nature of the implementation of the system. Figure 2 shows that a total number of 44% of the respondents agreed that their performance agreements were always signed on time. Fifty percent of the respondents disagreed, and 4% of the respondents strongly disagreed, while only 2% of the respondents indicated that they did not know whether their performance agreements were signed on time.

**Figure 2 Performance agreements are always signed on time**



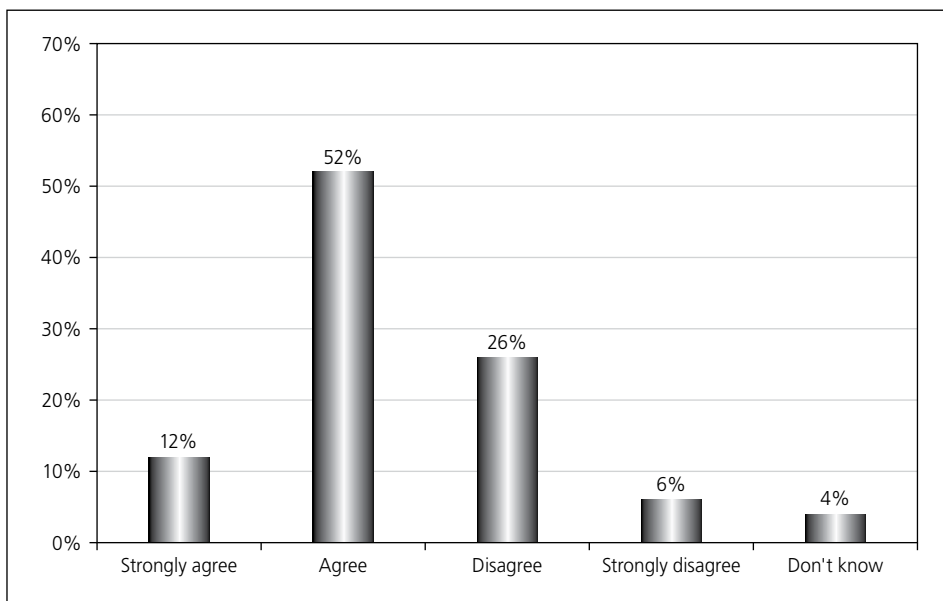
Although signing of the performance contract is an important part of managing performance, if it is done merely to comply with procedures, rather than as part of a development process, then signing carries no real significance. That is why it is important to view the signing within the context of feedback and communication. The next figure

**Figure 3 There is continuous feedback and communication between the employee and the immediate manager**





**Figure 4 Personal involvement in assessment ratings**



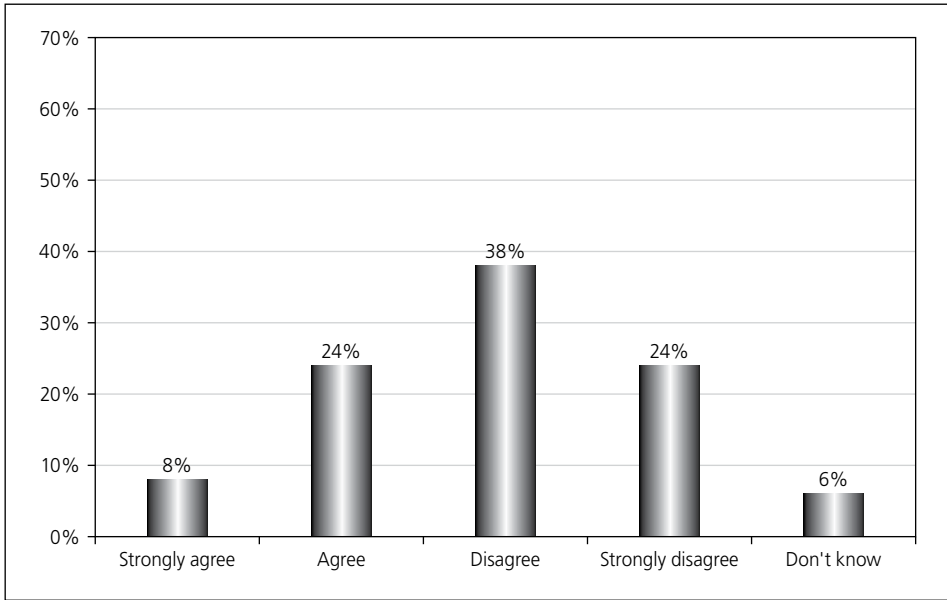
reflects the data regarding the nature of feedback and communication between the employee and manager.

The above question was intended to determine the nature of communication and feedback between the employee and the immediate manager and how effective the communication was. The purpose of the question was also to establish the extent of the effectiveness of the system and compliance with the legislation and the departmental PMDS. With regard to this question, mixed results are illustrated in Figure 3. According to this information, 38% of the respondents surveyed indicated that there was no continuous communication between them and the immediate manager regarding their individual work performance. Only 2% of respondents did not know whether there was continuous feedback and communication. Again, the majority identified that communication and feedback were done on a continuous basis, which implies that in terms of implementation, managers are doing well.

When the above is considered in view of the findings as displayed in the next two figures, the complexity of perception becomes evident. More than 50% of the respondents identified adequate feedback and communication with their managers, and more than 50% below indicated that they are personally involved in their assessment. Yet, the last figure clearly indicates that the large majority of the respondents are dissatisfied with the results of their assessments. This complexity will now be illustrated. The following figure presents the data regarding the extent of involvement of employees in their assessments.

Participation as one of the principles of PMDS is crucial to any organisation, in order to succeed in its goals. The above-mentioned question sought to establish the extent of involvement in the ratings by the employee. The results clearly show that the majority of respondents are personally involved in the assessment ratings of their performance within the DSDWCPD. These results contrast sharply with the following findings that show that the majority of respondents are clearly not satisfied with the manner in which personal assessments

**Figure 5 I am satisfied with assessments at my Service Point**



are conducted. The employees feel frustrated as there is no consistency in the implementation of the system. The argument can thus be made that contradictory messages can imply that the implementation of the system is flawed. Some employees are loath to express the real issues, and do not wish to participate in the assessment ratings due to fear of reprisal, while others may have given up on participating in the ratings because they argue that their participation does not make any difference. This argument is consistent with the views of Thomas and Bretz (1994) as cited in Femi (2013:91) that evaluations are often negatively perceived by employees and managers due to the absence of a sense of ownership which may be contributing to employees' levels of satisfaction with their assessments (as indicated in the following figure).

Figure 5 addresses the question of whether respondents are satisfied with their assessments and sought to determine the perceptions of the employees regarding the assessment and whether the assessment complies with the principles of fairness and impartiality. The above arguments contributes to their negative perceptions regarding the PMDS. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that although PMDS is suppose to be a consultative process, during implementation managers tend to focus on compliance and not real performance or development, which renders the PMDS to be perceived as ineffective and inefficient.

According to respondents, there were various changes on how to write assessments, resulting in rewriting and re-correcting assessments many times. While one respondent stated that the PMDS was being implemented efficiently, and as a result the Matlosana Service Point was on course in achieving the organisational goals, another immediately disagreed, stating categorically that the PMDS was being unfairly implemented by certain managers who used it to punish those they supervised. Yet another respondent stated that the PMDS was not implemented correctly, as everyone had his/her own interpretation of the system.

Respondents were in agreement that the general lack of understanding of the criteria that were being applied for performance measurement largely contributed to their negative

perceptions and determination that the PMDS was inefficient and ineffective. Respondents stated that there was insufficient feedback and good communication between employees and their managers (in contrast to the quantitative results presented in Figure 3), while others indicated that the communication breaks down during assessment periods, which in turn results in a lack of commitment from the employees.

Procedurally, it can be argued that the PMDS is implemented, but considering the negative perceptions of employees, its implementation is unsuccessful. The question remains – how does one change negative perceptions?

## **SYNTHESIS – SYSTEMATIC TRAINING**

A clear deduction emerges from the above findings and discussions. The problem with negative perceptions does not reside in specific inaccuracies with the PMDS or its implementation. The problem lies in the human element involved during implementation. Even though respondents agreed that they understand the purpose of the PMDS, clearly there is no real shared understanding of this purpose. Since managers are responsible for the management and development of their employees, their decisions reflect their discretion and their own perceptions regarding individual and organisational performance. As such, the article argues that when there is an inconsistent understanding amongst those responsible for implementation, a systematic training model needs to be developed in order to create a shared, common and accepted understanding of the purpose, process and value of the PMDS amongst managers and employees.

According to Van Dijk and Thornhill (2003:462) the focus of training and development is to ensure, identify and help develop the key competencies that enable individuals to perform to current and future job requirements. Sloman (1999:45) defines the systematic training as training undertaken on a planned basis as a result of applying logical series of steps. The steps proposed for the training strategy comprise the needs assessment phase, the plan and design phase, the deliver and implement phase and the evaluation phase. These phases will now be described briefly.

### **The needs assessments phase**

Abdullah (2010:12) emphasises the importance of assessing and analysing needs as part of building the foundation by identifying the kinds of intervention needed for an effective effort. During this phase the objectives must be set to clearly define the purpose of the training, the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for the job. A comprehensive needs assessment focuses upon the organisation, the job and the individual. For the organisation, it is of paramount importance that an analysis of the environment, strategies and the resources within the organisation must be conducted. This will assist in establishing critical areas where training is needed and which type of training programme is required. It will also assist the managers and human resource departments to determine whether training will be beneficial to the organisation, as well as what type of training will be appropriate for all the employees or certain units in the organisation. Thus, a systematic needs identification should be undertaken which will identify the degree of competence of managers and employees, in

order to enable them to meet the performance standard in relation to the implementation of the PMDS. Feedback from this process will assist in making decisions with regard to which employees should be prioritised in order to bridge the gap between actual and desired implementation of the system.

While the proposed systematic training strategy is focused upon ensuring a common understanding and consistent implementation of the PMDS, the strategy should also address how specific parts, such as personal development plans and their formulation, contribute to the overall success of the system and benefit derived from the system for the individual employee.

## **Plan and design the training phase**

The planning and design phase entails planning and selecting the appropriate training methods to be used, the learning outcomes to be achieved and also who will provide the training to the employees. A specific challenge highlighted in the research findings was that there is ineffective communication (mixed messages and inconsistencies with regard to recognition) with the explanations of the purpose and process associated with the PMDS. The results show that there is insufficient or improper communication which results in lack of verification of the level of understanding of the process. Managers should be trained to acknowledge that employees perceive the same phenomena or situations very differently (Schermerhorn 2011:219). Understanding and communicating this human behaviour effectively is essential to both the manager and the employee, in order to have a common understanding regarding the goals they set. It is important that organisations find ways to clearly communicate successes that demonstrate how the organisation is performing, and especially to find ways to socialise recounters of superior performance (Haid & Sims 2009:8). Thus, in planning and designing a training strategy to address negative perceptions, emphasis should not only be placed upon the components inherent in the PMDS, but more on the ability of managers to consistently manage these components through open communication.

## **Deliver and implement the content phase**

In the delivery and implementation of the content phase the focus is upon putting all the training plans that were made in the previous phase into practice. The content for the training programme must be stimulating to encourage active participation from the employees. This phase entails providing training to the employees as scheduled in the preceding phase. The important factor is how the training is going to be delivered, for example, is it going to be on-the-job training or off-the-job training. The trainer must consider all the methods of delivering training and select the most appropriate one, for instance, he or she must consider whether off-the-job, discussion, case-study or on-the-job training is the most appropriate method. More important is that more consideration has to be placed upon whether the trainer has the required competencies and expertise regarding the PMDS. In this case the emphasis should be on providing content aimed at changing perceptions, both for manager and employee. Thus, the person communicating this content should be credible to both manager and employee, as well as be able to show an understanding for both sides.

Through the PMDS, employee strengths and weaknesses should be identified, but, the current system as applied is perceived to be biased and to lack transparency. The lack of



effective training in the PMDS is argued to be the main challenge in the implementation process. Even though the respondents stated that they were trained in the use of the PMDS, the lack of a shared understanding, as evident through the manner in which implementation is perceived, provides a contrary argument.

Based upon the findings from the research it is recommended that the training strategy content should focus upon the following:

- use of PMDS as a development tool;
- importance of each of the PMDS components to employee and organisational performance, that is, signing performance agreements on time and jointly deciding on performance priorities linked to organisational priorities;
- selection of trainers should be based upon their competencies and expertise in PMDS rather than experience on the subject matter only;
- the implementation phase should effectively and efficiently deal with the content around development and recognition of employees;
- the significance of constructive feedback should be emphasised; and
- managers should be regularly and intensively trained on the various techniques of effectively appraising or assessing employees' performance.

## **The evaluation phase**

Drawing from Erasmus et al. (2005:473–474) the four levels of evaluation that assist in measuring the impact that training has had on trainees are:

### ***Level 1: Reaction to training***

In this case the aim is to gather information and feelings from the trainees about the training, in order to determine whether the training objectives were clear. This must be done immediately after the training while the trainees still remember the details of the training. The fact that the trainee could have enjoyed training does not mean that training would ultimately be beneficial to the organisation, hence the need for evaluation (Erasmus *et al.* 2006:473). Developing a reaction questionnaire to determine immediate reaction regarding purpose of the PMDS would indicate whether a shared understanding has been achieved amongst managers and employees.

### ***Level 2: Learning achieved through training***

This learning through training stage involves the learning measures: the degree to which the trainees have accumulated training knowledge, skills and all concepts related to the training context into their work environment. For the purpose of the article, this level of evaluation should include managers and employees jointly discussing the purpose and implementation of PMDS during specifically created forums or meetings arranged amongst managers and then between managers and employees.

### ***Level 3: Behaviour after training***

This behaviour after training level is about measuring the behaviour of participants after training. The trainer should visit participants two to three months after the PMDS training has been conducted, in order to monitor the progress and provide support where it is

needed (Erasmus *et al.* 2006:474). For the purposes of the article, in order to determine whether there has been any improvement in the perceptions of the employees regarding the implementation of the system, the human resource departments can arrange peer reviews to assess the impact of the training on the employees' perceptions. Managers can also use their skills to make an assessment of any change in the perceptions of the employees which will automatically have an influence on the way the employees perceive the system. Follow-up must be made within three months by the trainers to check upon the progress made by the employees with regard to their perceptions about the system and to ascertain if there are any areas that require further training in the PMDS.

#### ***Level 4: Results achieved through training***

This is the last stage on the results achieved through training the focus is upon the results of training. The impact of the PMDS training programme as a whole is assessed objectively. Here significant questions must be posed, such as what the impact of the training content and its objectives are on the achievement of the objectives of the organisation? Important facets to be examined are financial implications, productivity, quality spending, quality service, productivity and turnover, value for money, cost effectiveness, employee turnover and employee attitudes (Erasmus *et al.* 2006:474). For the purpose of the article, the evaluation of the results of the training in PMDS must be done against the achievement of the organisational objectives. Evaluating the results also involves whether the training in PMDS has capacitated the employees to enable them to perform their work to the best of their ability, and whether they can render quality service to the public. The evaluation of the impact of the training programme will also have to focus upon establishing whether the employees are still satisfied with their current work environment, and their attitudes and perceptions regarding the PMDS as a tool for development. A questionnaire can be formulated and distributed twice a year amongst the employees by the Human Resource Department to endeavour to determine their perceptions regarding the impact of training in PMDS on organisational objectives. This will possibly assist in making valid, objective evaluations and uncover the real barriers to the successful implementation of the PMDS.

By proposing a training strategy, the intention is to offer solutions to the negative perceptions of employees regarding the PMDS as described earlier. Skills development through education and training has always been a powerful lever for improving both individual opportunity and institutional competitiveness in countries and organisations world-wide (Nel *et al.* 2011:357). Successful implementation of the PMDS requires that a systematic training strategy be designed to address the gaps in the system, in order to maximise the performance of employees and the overall performance of the organisation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The article highlighted the important contribution that employee perceptions has on the ability of managers to manage and develop employee performance. Managing employee perceptions is as important as managing the individual components of a PMDS. The findings detailed in the article supported the argument that a shared understanding regarding the purpose, process and value of the PMDS must be evident as prerequisite for



its effective and efficient implementation. The article proposed, based upon qualitative case study research using documents and questionnaires, that a systematic training strategy should be developed to address the negative perceptions of employees. The importance of a carefully planned, systematic and comprehensive training programme which responds to the needs of employees cannot be over-emphasised. Development should not only focus upon the skills and attitudes of the employees, but rather an integration of these two factors (skills and attitudes) and the way in which perception affects individual and organisational performance.

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